

### Amendments to Claims

1. (Currently amended): A gas inlet manifold for a plasma chamber, comprising:

a top wall perforated by a gas inlet orifice;

a gas distribution plate perforated by a ~~plurality~~ number of gas outlet orifices, wherein the gas distribution plate is spaced away from the top wall; and

<sup>15</sup>  
<sub>12</sub> a side wall including one or more side wall segments, wherein each side wall segment includes an upper portion, a lower flange, and a vertically oriented sheet extending between ~~an~~ the upper ~~flange~~ portion of that side wall segment and a the lower flange of that side wall segment;

wherein the upper ~~portion~~ flange of each side wall segment is mounted to the top wall of the gas inlet manifold; and

wherein the lower flange of each side wall segment is mounted to the gas distribution plate. ;

and

~~wherein the side wall encircles a region within the gas inlet manifold extending between the top wall and the gas distribution plate, so that the gas inlet orifice and the gas outlet orifices are in fluid communication with said region.~~

2. (Currently amended): A gas inlet manifold according to claim 1, wherein:

the top wall of the gas inlet manifold has a surface facing the gas distribution plate that is generally rectangular with four sides;

the gas distribution plate has a surface facing the top wall that is generally rectangular with four sides;

the side wall comprises four of said side wall segments; and

the sheet of each of the four side wall segments is generally rectangular and extends between a corresponding one of the four sides of said surface of the top wall and a corresponding one of the four sides of said surface of the gas distribution plate.

1 3. (Currently amended): A gas inlet manifold according to claim 1, wherein:  
2 the gas distribution plate has one or more grooves in its perimeter; and  
3 the lower flange of each side wall segment ~~of the side wall~~ extends into one of said grooves.

1 4. (Currently amended): A gas inlet manifold according to claim 1, wherein:  
2 the gas distribution plate further comprises  
3 a lip extending radially outward from the perimeter of the gas distribution plate, and  
4 a plurality of pins attached to, and extending downward from, the lip of the gas distribution plate;  
5 the lower flange of each side wall segment ~~of the side wall~~ is perforated by a plurality of holes;  
6 each lower flange is mounted to the gas distribution plate so that each of said pins extends  
7 through a corresponding one of said holes; and  
8 each hole is has a width that exceeds the width of its corresponding pin so as to permit relative  
9 movement between each lower flange and the gas distribution plate.

1 5. (Currently amended): A gas inlet manifold according to claim 4, wherein:  
2 each sheet is flexible so as to permit movement of the lower flange in a direction perpendicular  
3 to the sheet; and  
4 for each side wall segment ~~of the side wall~~, each hole in the lower flange of that side wall  
5 segment has a long axis parallel to the sheet of that side wall segment.

1 6. (Original): A gas inlet manifold according to claim 4, wherein:  
2 the width of each hole along one axis of the hole exceeds the width of its corresponding pin  
3 along said axis by an amount sufficient to permit an amount of relative movement between each lower  
4 flange and the gas distribution plate that exceeds the maximum likely relative differential thermal  
5 expansion between the lower flange and the gas distribution plate during operation of the plasma  
6 chamber.

1 7. (Original): A gas inlet manifold according to claim 4, wherein:  
2 the width of each hole along one axis of the hole exceeds the width of its corresponding pin  
3 along said axis by at least 0.03 inch.

1 8. (Original): A gas inlet manifold according to claim 4, wherein:  
2 the width of each hole along one axis of the hole exceeds the width of its corresponding pin  
3 along said axis by at least 0.1% of the widest dimension of the gas distribution plate.

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1 9. (Original): A gas inlet manifold according to claim 1, wherein:  
2 said one or more side wall segments include first and second side wall segments;  
3 the sheet of the first side wall segment and the sheet of the second side wall segment are  
4 separated by a gap, wherein the gap has its longest dimension extending vertically between the top wall  
5 of the gas inlet manifold and the gas distribution plate; and  
6 the gas inlet manifold further comprises a post mounted radially outward of the gap and  
7 positioned sufficiently close to the gap to impede the flow of gas through the gap.

1 10. (Original): A gas inlet manifold according to claim 1, wherein:  
2 said one or more side wall segments include first and second side wall segments;  
3 the sheet of the first side wall segment is bent at a first angle along a first vertical vertex line so  
4 that: (i) a first end area of the sheet extends between the first vertex line and an edge of the sheet, and  
5 (ii) a first central area of the sheet lies on the opposite side of the first vertex line;  
6 the sheet of the second side wall segment is bent at a second angle along a second vertical  
7 vertex line so that: (i) a second end area of the sheet extends between the second vertex line and an  
8 edge of the sheet, and (ii) a second central area of the sheet lies on the opposite side of the second  
9 vertex line;

10 said edge of the sheet of the first side wall segment and said edge of the sheet of the second  
11 side wall segment are positioned so as to be parallel and separated by a gap, wherein the gap has a  
12 longest dimension extending vertically between the top wall of the gas inlet manifold and the gas  
13 distribution plate; and  
14 the first and second angles are such that the first and second end areas are coplanar and are  
15 separated only by said gap.

1 11. (Original): A gas inlet manifold according to claim 10, wherein both the first angle and the second  
2 angle are 45 degrees.

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1 12. (Original): A gas inlet manifold according to claim 10, further comprising a post mounted radially  
2 outward of the gap, wherein:

3 the post extends vertically along the entire length of the gap;

4 the post extends laterally so as to overlie the first end area, the second end area, a portion of the  
5 first central area adjoining the first vertex line, and a portion of the second central area adjoining the  
6 second vertex line; and

7 the post is positioned sufficiently close to said portions of the first and second areas, and said  
8 portions of the first and second areas are sufficiently large, so that the post impedes gas within the inlet  
9 manifold from flowing through the gap.

1 13. (Currently amended): A plasma chamber comprising:

2 a chamber wall;

3 an inlet manifold top wall attached to the chamber wall, wherein the inlet manifold is perforated  
4 by a gas inlet orifice;

5 a gas distribution plate perforated by a ~~plurality~~ number of gas outlet orifices, wherein the gas  
6 distribution plate is positioned within the plasma chamber and spaced away from the inlet manifold top

7 wall; and

8 an inlet manifold side wall including one or more side wall segments, wherein each side wall  
9 segment includes an upper portion, a lower flange, and a vertically oriented sheet extending between  
10 an the upper flange portion of that side wall segment and a the lower flange of that side wall segment;

11 wherein the upper portion flange of each side wall segment is mounted to the top wall of the  
12 inlet manifold;

13 wherein the lower flange of each side wall segment is mounted to the gas distribution plate; and  
14 ~~wherein the side wall encircles a region within the gas inlet manifold extending between the top~~  
15 ~~wall and the gas distribution plate, so that the gas inlet orifice and the gas outlet orifices are in fluid~~  
16 ~~communication with said region; and~~

17 wherein the inlet manifold side wall interposes a sufficiently high thermal resistance between  
18 the chamber wall and the gas distribution plate so that, during operation of the plasma chamber, the gas  
19 distribution plate has a spatial variation in temperature no greater than 50 degrees C.

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1 14. (Original): A plasma chamber according to claim 13, wherein said spatial variation in temperature  
2 is no greater than 10 degrees C.

1 15. (Currently amended): A plasma chamber for processing a substrate, comprising:

2 a heated pedestal having an upper surface on which a substrate can be supported;

3 a chamber wall;

4 an inlet manifold top wall attached to the chamber wall, wherein the inlet manifold is perforated  
5 by a gas inlet orifice;

6 a gas distribution plate perforated by a plurality number of gas outlet orifices, wherein the gas  
7 distribution plate is positioned within the plasma chamber and spaced away from the inlet manifold top  
8 wall; and

9 an inlet manifold side wall including one or more side wall segments, wherein each side wall  
10 segment includes an upper portion, a lower flange, and a vertically oriented sheet extending between  
11 an the upper flange portion of that side wall segment and a the lower flange of that side wall segment

12 wherein the upper portion flange of each side wall segment is mounted to the top wall of the  
13 inlet manifold;

14 wherein the lower flange of each side wall segment is mounted to the gas distribution plate; and  
15 ~~wherein the side wall encircles a region within the gas inlet manifold extending between the top~~  
16 ~~wall and the gas distribution plate, so that the gas inlet orifice and the gas outlet orifices are in fluid~~  
17 ~~communication with said region; and~~

18 wherein the inlet manifold side wall interposes a sufficiently high thermal resistance between  
19 the chamber wall and the gas distribution plate so that, during operation of the plasma chamber with  
20 said substrate being supported on the pedestal, there is a temperature difference between the pedestal  
and the upper surface of the substrate no greater than 50 degrees C.

1 16. (Original): A plasma chamber according to claim 15, wherein said temperature difference is no  
2 greater than 25 degrees C.

1 17. (Currently amended): A method of minimizing thermal stress on a gas distribution plate through  
2 which gas is dispensed into the interior of a plasma chamber, comprising the steps of:

3 providing a plasma chamber having an interior encircled by a chamber wall;

4 mounting an inlet manifold top wall within the chamber;

5 providing an inlet manifold side wall having one or more side wall segments, wherein each  
6 side wall segment includes an upper portion, a lower flange, and a vertically oriented sheet extending  
7 between an the upper flange portion of that side wall segment and a the lower flange of that side wall  
8 segment;

9 mounting the upper portion flange of each segment of the inlet manifold side wall to the inlet  
10 manifold top wall so as to position the segments of the inlet manifold side wall so that they collectively  
11 encircle an inlet manifold region within the plasma chamber;

12 mounting the lower flange of the inlet manifold side wall to a gas distribution plate perforated  
13 by a ~~plurality~~ number of gas outlet orifices, wherein the inlet manifold top wall, the inlet manifold side  
14 wall, and the gas distribution plate collectively enclose said inlet manifold region; and

15 supplying a gas through an aperture in the inlet manifold back wall so that the gas flows into  
16 the inlet manifold region and then flows through the gas outlet orifices into the interior of the plasma  
17 chamber.

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18. (Original): A method according to claim 17, further comprising the step of:

maintaining a plasma within the interior of the plasma chamber;

3 wherein the step of providing the inlet manifold side wall includes the step of providing each  
4 sheet with a thickness sufficiently small, and an axial height sufficiently large, so as to produce a  
5 substantial temperature differential between the inlet manifold back wall and the gas distribution plate  
6 in response to the heat transferred from the plasma.

1 19. (Original): A method according to claim 18, wherein said temperature differential is at least 100  
2 degrees C.

1 20. (Original): A method according to claim 17, wherein the step of providing the inlet manifold side  
2 wall includes the step of:

3 providing the at least one flexible portion of the inlet manifold side wall with a flexibility  
4 sufficient so that no substantial force is required to bend the inlet manifold side wall by an amount  
5 sufficient to permit the gas distribution plate to expand by at least one percent.